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SOME PLAY-PARTY SONGS FROM EASTERN ILLINOIS.

BY CARL VAN DOREN.

THE following songs, for the most part, by 1900 were no longer current in the section of Vermilion County, Illinois, from which they have been collected, but were remembered, if at all, only by the older members of the community, and by the young people in certain families which had been little touched by a more sophisticated world. They are here given as they were taken down in 1907 from the recitation of Mr. and Mrs. Knight of Muncie, in that county, who remembered them from the day, not long after the Civil War, when they were widely known in the neighborhood, and furnished the music for all dances or "play-parties." A previous intention to study them at length, when opportunity offered, has given way before the feeling that it is perhaps better to print them (I have only the words) for the use of scholars who have devoted special attention to the subject of American song and dance.

I. THERE COMES TWO DUKES A-ROVING.

There comes two dukes a-roving, a-roving, a-roving,
There comes two dukes a-roving,
With a ramsey tamsey team.

"Please, what is your good-will, sir, good-will, sir, good-will, sir,
Please what is your good-will, sir,
With a ramsey tamsey team?"

"My good-will is to marry, to marry, to marry,
My good-will is to marry,
With a ramsey tamsey team."

"Pray, won't you have one of us, sir, us, sir, us, sir,
Pray, won't you have one of us, sir,
With a ramsey tamsey team?"

"Oh, no! you're too dark and drowsy, drowsy, drowsy,
Oh, no! you're too dark and drowsy,
With a ramsey tamsey team."

"We're just as good as you, sir, you, sir, you, sir,
We're just as good as you, sir,
With a ramsey tamsey team."

This piece will be recognized as the one discussed by Newell ("Games and Songs of American Children," No. 3), under the title "Here comes

a Duke;" but Mr. and Mrs. Knight had never heard of it as a children's game, and knew it only as a common dance-song, of which the words had no special significance except that the parts spoken by the girls in the dialogue were emphasized by the girls in the dance. It is interesting to observe that the word "tea" or "dee," given by Newell as the last word of the refrain, becomes "team" in the Illinois version by the natural substitution of an intelligible for an unintelligible term. In the same fashion, "blowsy," a word not common in the neighborhood where this song was found, is given as "drowsy," which makes the worse sense.

2. BUFFALO GIRLS.

"O Buffalo Girls! are you coming out to-night,
Are you coming out to-night,
Are you coming out to-night?
O Buffalo Girls! are you coming out to-night,
To dance by the light of the moon?"

"Oh, yes! oh, yes! we are coming out to-night,
We are coming out to-night,
We are coming out to-night,
Oh, yes! oh, yes! we are coming out to-night,
To dance by the light of the moon."

I danced all night, and my heel kept a-rocking,
My heel kept a-rocking,
My heel kept a-rocking.
I danced all night, and my heel kept a-rocking,
Danced by the light of the moon.

I danced with a girl with a hole in the heel of her stocking,
In the heel of her stocking,
In the heel of her stocking.
I danced with a girl with a hole in the heel of her stocking,
Danced in the light of the moon.

This version of so well known a piece varies slightly from any other I have seen. The long lines of the last stanza obviously contain extra syllables, and had to be sung very rapidly to fit the tune. Dr. C. L. Van Doren of Urbana, formerly of Vermilion County, remembers the last stanza in another form: —

I danced with a girl with a hole in her stocking,
And her heel kept a-rocking,
And her heel kept a-rocking.
I danced with a girl with a hole in her stocking,
Danced by the light of the moon.

3. WEEVILY WHEAT.

"Oh, come down hither and trip together
 All in the morning early,
 Your heart and hand I do demand,
 'Tis true, I love you dearly."

Chorus.

"I want none of your weevily wheat,
 I want none of your barley,
 For I must have the best of wheat
 To make a cake for Charley."

"If you love me as I love you,
 We'll have no time to tarry;
 We'll have the old folks fixing round
 For you and I to marry."

"What, marry you, the likes of you?
 Do you think I'd marry my cousin
 When I can get just plenty of boys
 For sixteen cents a dozen?"

"If you can get such boys as me
 For sixteen cents a dozen,
 You'd better buy a load or two
 And ship them down to London."

It's over the river to feed the sheep,
 It's over the river to Charley;
 It's over the river to feed the sheep
 And measure out some barley.

This again varies from any form I have encountered. It may be worth mentioning, as an illustration of the decay which had fallen upon the tradition of these songs by the last decade of the nineteenth century, in the township where they had been popular thirty years before, that the children were all familiar with a dislocated stanza from "Weevily Wheat" which they sang to tease one another, without knowing that it belonged to a longer song or that it had any connection with dancing:—

Oh, Charley is a nice young man,
 Oh, Charley is a dandy;
 Oh, Charley likes to kiss the girls
 Whenever they come handy.

4. OLD DAN TUCKER.

Old Dan Tucker's come to town,
 He swings the ladies round and round,
 First to the east, and then to the west,
 And then to the one that he loves best.

Chorus.

Get out of the way for Old Dan Tucker,
Come too late to get his supper;
Supper's over and dishes washed,
And nothing left but a piece of squash.

Old Dan Tucker's a fine old man,
Washed his feet in the frying-pan,
Combed his hair with a wagon-wheel,
And died with the toothache in his heel.

This song is still familiar to all the children of the vicinity.

5. TURKEY IN THE STRAW.

I went out to milk, and I didn't know how,
I milked the goat instead of the cow.
Rake 'em up, shake 'em up, any way at all,
I'll make you up a tune called "Turkey in the Straw."

Well, as I was a-going down the road
With a tired team and a heavy load,
I cracked my whip, and the leader sprung,
And the off-hoss busted the wagon-tongue.

The tune of this song was far more popular than the words, of which I have heard but these two stanzas.

6. CREEL-MY-CRANKIE.

Creel-my-crankie's a very fine song.
We'll sing it and dance it all along.
From the heel unto the toe,
Creel-my-crankie, here we go!

This stanza, remembered by Mrs. Knight from the singing of her grandmother, is plainly connected with the "Kilmacrankie" of which a version has been printed in this Journal (28 : 272); it deserves notice for the extraordinary perversion of "Creel-my-crankie," which was presumably once "Killiecrankie."

7. THE JUNIPER-TREE.

O sister Phoebe! how merry were we
The night we sat under the juniper-tree!
The juniper-tree, higho, higho,
The juniper-tree, higho!

I have a young daughter, she sleeps upstairs;
She's always complaining being afraid of the bears.
Being afraid of the bears, higho, higho,
Being afraid of the bears, higho!

Old Rogers came out with his old rusty gun,
 And swore he would shoot us if we didn't run.
 If we didn't run, higho, higho,
 If we didn't run, higho!

Put this hat on your head, it will keep your head warm.
 Take a sweet kiss, it will do you no harm.
 'Twill do you no harm, higho, higho,
 'Twill do you no harm, higho.

Rise you up, daughter, and choose you a man.
 Go choose you the fairest that ever you can.
 So rise you up daughter, and go, and go,
 So rise you up, daughter, and go!

Go rise you up, sonny, and choose you a wife,
 Go choose you the fairest you can for your life.
 Go rise you up, sonny, and go, and go,
 Go rise you up, sonny, and go!

This, of course, was a kissing-game. A girl (or boy) sat in a chair in the centre of the room, while the others formed a circle round her (or him), marching and singing. A boy (or girl) carrying a hat walked round and round the sitting player till the end of the third stanza. At the signal given in the fourth stanza, the hat was placed on the head of the sitter, and she (or he) was kissed. Of the last two stanzas, the last was sung if a boy had received the salute, the next to the last if it had been a girl.

8. IF GIRLS THEY WERE DUCKS.

If girls they were ducks and would swim on the ocean,
 The boys would turn drakes and follow the motion.
 Sing hi away, he away, he!

I have not been able to connect this stanza with any others.

9. HAPPY IS THE MILLER.

- (a) Happy is the miller who lives by himself.
 As the wheels roll around, he is gaining in his wealth.
 One hand in the hopper, and the other in the sack,
 As the wheel rolls around, the bags fall back.

The last line of this song I have not seen elsewhere. It is, of course, a reference to the change of partners as the couples march around the make-believe miller. Newell gives a version (No. 40), and many others are in print. I have heard another form of the same song in Vermillion County.

- (b) There was a jolly miller, he lives by himself.
As the wheel rolls around, he is gaining all his wealth.
One hand in the hopper, and the other in the bag,
As the wheel rolls around, we'll all give a grab.

10. MARCHING TO QUEBEC.

We're marching down to Old Quebec,
And the drums are loudly beating.
The American boys have gained the day,
And the British are retreating.

The wars are all over, and we'll turn back,
And never more be parted.
Open the ring and choose a couple in
To relieve the broken-hearted.

Newell discusses this piece as an unusual instance of historical references in a child's game (No. 59). In Vermilion County it was not a child's game; but there was no special connection, so far as I could learn, between the words and the event in the mind of those who sang the song.

11. GREEN GROW THE RUSHES O!

Green grows the willow-tree!
Green grows the willow-tree!
Green grows the willow-tree!
Come, my love, and stand by me!

Green grow the rushes o'er!
Green grow the rushes o'er!
Green grow the rushes o'er!
Kiss her quick and let her go!

This game, given by Newell as found in eastern Massachusetts (No. 7), was played differently in Vermilion County. There all the players but one joined hands and danced around in a circle, with the odd player inside. The last line of the first stanza invited him to choose one of the dancers. When he had chosen a girl, he might kiss her at the signal of the last line in the second stanza. She was then required to choose a man for a similar honor. In this case the pronoun of the last line became masculine.

12. I'M A POOR OLD CHIMNEY SWEEPER.

I'm a poor old chimney sweeper.
I have but one daughter, and I can't keep her.
And since my daughter is resolved to marry,
Go choose you a man and do not tarry.

Now, here's one of your own choosing.
 Be in a hurry, no time for losing.
 Join your right hands, and this broomstick step over;
 Kiss the sweet lips of your own true-lover.

This game was played, just how I do not know, as a kind of mock-marriage ceremony; but it served primarily, as the lines make clear, to excuse kissing.

13. ROXIE ANN.

Roxie Ann, you awful girl,
 You fooled me all the while.
 You fooled me once,
 You fooled me twice,
 You fooled me all the while.

Chorus.

You've been a long time fooling, fooling,
 You've been a long time fooling me.

This may possibly be of Negro origin. It was sung by settlers from Kentucky.

14. GOING DOWN TO ROUSIE'S.

I'm going down to Rousie's, to Rousie's, to Rousie's,
 Going down to Rousie's to get good beer.

Chorus.

Because he keeps good beer, because he keeps good beer,
 I'm going down to Rousie's, to Rousie's, to Rousie's,
 Going down to Rousie's to get good beer.

Never mind the old folks, the old folks, the old folks.
 Never mind the old folks, they're all gone away.

The last clause was sometimes sung, "They won't care."

15. OLD VIRGINNY NEVER TIRE.

Here goes Topsy through the window,
 Here goes Topsy through the window,
 Here goes Topsy through the window,
 Old Virginny never tire!

Here goes Sambo through the window,
 Here goes Sambo through the window,
 Here goes Sambo through the window,
 Old Virginny never tire!

All go hug them round the shoulders,
 All go hug them round the shoulders,
 All go hug them round the shoulders,
 Old Virginny never tire!

As this old game was played in Vermilion County, the players joined hands and danced in a ring, singing. One of the girls left the line, went across the circle, and started to return to her place. One of the boys did the same and then tried to catch the girl. If he caught her before she reached her place, he was given permission by the third stanza to embrace her.

16. FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN.

Fire on the mountain, run, boys, run!
Fire on the mountain, run, boys, run!
Fire on the mountain, run, boys, run!
Hey, jim along, jim along, Josie!

Cat's in the cream-jar, run, girls, run!
Cat's in the cream-jar, run, girls, run!
Cat's in the cream-jar, run, girls, run!
Hey, jim along, jim along, Josie!

One proof that "jim along" was thought of as an imperative verb is that "get along" sometimes took its place.

17. SKIP TO MY LOU.

Of the many verses of "Skip to my Lou," Mr. and Mrs. Knight remembered, beside the chorus, only these: —

Pretty as a peach, and prettier too,
I'll get another girl prettier than you;
If I can't get another, then I'll take you;
Rats in the bean-patch, two by two.

18. KING WILLIAM WAS KING JAMES'S SON.

King William was King James's son,
It was a royal race he run.
Upon his breast he wore a star
To point the way to the ocean far.

Go choose to the east, go choose to the west,
Go choose to the one that you love best.
If he's not here to take your part,
Go choose the next one to your heart.

Down on this carpet you must kneel
As low as the grass grows on the field.
Salute your bride and kiss her sweet,
And rise again upon your feet.

Now you are married, you must be good,
And make your man chop all the wood.

We now pronounce you man and wife,
And live together all your life.

Now you are married, you must agree,
And feed your wife on sugar and tea, etc.

This was not exclusively a children's game in Vermilion County. It will be noticed that the last two admonitory stanzas — one sung to girls, one to boys — are analogous to those given by Newell (No. 21) as parts of the old song, "Oats, Pease, Beans, and Barley grows;" but Mr. and Mrs. Knight remember them as always sung with "King William was King James's son." It is clear, however, from their version of the former song, that the two pieces had suffered some confusion in this community.

19. OATS, PEASE, BEANS, AND BARLEY GROWS.

Oats and beans and barley grow,
Oats and beans and barley grow;
You nor I nor no one knows
How oats and beans and barley grow.

Thus the farmer sows the seed;
Thus he stands and takes his ease.
He stamps his foot and claps his hand
And turns around to view his land.

You're waiting for a partner,
You're waiting for a partner,
So open the ring and choose her in,
And kiss her when you get her in.

Down on the carpet you must kneel,
Low as the grass grows on the field.
Salute your bride and kiss her sweet,
And rise again upon your feet.

20. THE WILD-GOOSE CHASE.

At first two steps we do advance,
And back again retire.
It's first your right, and then your left,
To accomplish your desire.

We'll cast off all earthly care,
And meet again in bliss.
Come go with me, my dearest dear,
We'll have a wild-goose chase.

In this game the players stood in two rows, partners opposite one another. At the last line one of the boys chased his partner entirely

around both lines; and if he caught her before she reached her former station, he might kiss her.

21. WE'RE MARCHING ROUND A PRETTY GIRL.

We're marching round a pretty girl,
A pretty girl, a pretty girl,
We're marching round a pretty girl,
As merry as we can be.

One and one are two,
Two and one are three.
We're marching round a pretty girl,
As merry as we can be.

The oak grows tall,
The pine grows slim,
So rise you up, my pretty girl,
And choose your partner in.

A girl stood within a revolving circle of players, and chose, at the indicated signal, a partner from the line, who joined her within the circle. The game was continued until the entire line had been chosen and were huddled in a group at the centre. If a boy instead of a girl were addressed, he was called, instead of "pretty girl," "cabbage-head," "punkin-head," or some such term. The words "red bird" might be used for either sex.

22. IN THIS RING COMES A LADY FAIR.

In this ring comes a lady fair,
Sky-blue eyes and curly hair,
Rosy cheeks and a dimpled chin.
Please, kind sir, will you step in?

Oh, dear me! what a choice you made!
Better in the dust you had been laid.
Kiss her quick and let her go.
Don't you keep her waiting so.

The players marched in a circle round a girl, who chose a partner from them at the end of the first stanza. The concluding line was sometimes, —

Don't you tell her mother—O!

23. I WONDER WHERE MARIA'S GONE.

I wonder where Maria's gone,
I wonder where Maria's gone,
I wonder where Maria's gone,
So early in the morning!

I expect she's gone to seek her love,
 I expect she's gone to seek her love,
 I expect she's gone to seek her love,
 So early in the morning.

First your right, and then your left,
 First your right, and then your left,
 First your right, and then your left,
 And then you swing your partner.

24.

Mother, O mother! my toes are sore
 A-dancing over your sandy floor.
 I'll dance this reel, and I'll dance no more.
 Go home with the girls in the morning.

There are touches of local color in the fact that settlers from the North sang "sandy floor;" and those from the South, "puncheon floor."

25.

Put your right foot in,
 Then your right foot out.
 Give your right foot a shake, shake, shake,
 And turn your body about.

All the players stood in a circle and went through the motions directed by the words, following with other stanzas in which the same process was demanded of the left foot, right hand, left hand, head, etc. Although clearly the same game as Newell's "Right Elbow In" (No. 68), this form was played by adults in Illinois.

The particular community in which these songs flourished may be indicated as lying roughly within a line drawn through the following villages: Ogden, Fithian, Muncie, Bronson, Brothers, Collison, Jamesburg, Henning, Potomac, Armstrong, Gerald, Royal. It was a community made up of settlers from almost every Eastern State. Hardly any one represented less than three or four generations of native-born ancestors. No railroad crossed this particular region until 1900, although it was almost entirely bounded by railway-lines. Communication with the outer world was not extensive, and the local customs were strongly marked. Yet almost of their own inertia such songs as I have here recorded had died out by 1890, and it would probably be difficult to find them surviving now, except in the memory of the older citizens of the place. This little area has, however, still a set of local customs, which ought to be investigated in detail by a student thoroughly acquainted with American folk-lore.